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# EPISTEMOLOGY

## PART I
## TRUTH AND CERTITUDE

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# EPISTEMOLOGY

## INTRODUCTION

1. We have seen in a former volume ("Formal Logic") that Logic in general is, *"the art and science which directs the operations of reasoning in the attainment of truth."* That "the operations of reasoning" may lead to truth they must be both,

(a) *Correct* in their procedure, that is, the three cognitive acts, idea, judgment, and reasoning considered as strictly subjective processes, must obey the laws of Formal Logic and consequently be consistent or free from contradiction, and

(b) *True* in their content or matter, that is, they must reveal realities or things as they are, distinct from and independent of the mental, subjective processes of simple apprehension, judgment and reasoning. A truly good suit of clothes cannot be made out of shoddy material, even should the cut and style be correct. The material must also be really good. It may happen that the *material* of a thought process is true while the thought process itself may be incorrect, just as the thought process may be correct, though the matter may happen to be false.

2. The primary aim of Formal Logic or Dialectics is to teach certain rules (as an art) and give the

reasons for these rules (as a science) with the view of securing the **correctness** of the "operations of reasoning." People of course naturally and spontaneously thought correctly long before philosophers formulated the rules and laws of correct thinking, just as people used language correctly and spoke eloquently before the rules of grammar and rhetoric were set forth and systematized. "Non eloquentiam ex artificio, sed artificium ex eloquentia natum esse." (Cicero, De Oratore I. 32). "Eloquence is not the outcome of artificial rules, but rather artificial rules are derived from eloquence."

3. The primary aim, on the other hand of this second part of Logic is, to investigate and scrutinize the **matter** or objective content of the knowledge which the exercise of our cognitive faculties naturally and spontaneously does, as a fact, profess to present to us, with the view of justifying, on reasonable grounds, and consequently of accepting, its validity and truth. But the problem of critically investigating the validity of our naturally acquired knowledge is, at the very outset, beset with this difficulty. How can intellect be validly used as an instrument to criticise and investigate intellect? If you assume without investigation that intellect is trustworthy and capable of arriving at truth and certainty, it obviously appears to be "a begging of the question." If you don't assume the trustworthiness of intellect, but deny or seriously doubt, its capacity to attain truth and certainty, then you are making use of, in your investigation, a really doubtful or discredited faculty, and as such, all its deliverances will consequently be doubtful or false. The solution of this problem leads us to the discussion of:

4. **The attitude of mind in which we are to approach the investigation of our spontaneously**

**and naturally acquired knowledge.** Every human being normally constituted, has, on arriving at mature life, amassed a certain amount of knowledge by the natural, direct and spontaneous exercise of his cognitive faculties. The very fact that he can distinguish illusions and error from truth *implies* that the mind can and actually does spontaneously possess truth and knows that it possesses it, and is, therefore, capable of naturally knowing truth. Otherwise he could never discriminate what is false from what is true. Every man of sound sense is also aware that he has made mistakes in the past; that errors have, from time to time, crept into the sum total of his spontaneously acquired knowledge; nay, it would not surprise him if some items of his knowledge which he now confidently accepts as true, should in the future turn out to be false. Yet notwithstanding this fact of error and possibility of error, he is still confidently assured that the great bulk of his naturally acquired knowledge is valid. No philosophical juggling will wrest from him the assurance of the truth and certainty, for example, of first principles, the reality of his own existence, the reality of the external world, the existence of God, the moral law.

Now this naturally acquired knowledge may be summarized under the following headings:

(a) Men profess to have a decided conviction of the truth of immediate judgments based upon the report of the external and internal senses.
(b) Of first principles or axioms.
(c) Of deductively reasoned conclusions derived from premises previously known and accepted as true.
(d) Of a certain number of the laws of nature, which govern individual facts or happenings,

and which are arrived at by a process of inductive reasoning.

(e) Of knowledge derived from the testimony of witnesses.

Those are the chief departments of knowledge which the natural workings of the mind spontaneously deliver to us. The problem then, that confronts us, is, can the persuasion, which we confidently entertain that the great bulk at least of the above spontaneous deliverances of our cognitive faculties are true, be justified as objectively valid, by the critical scrutiny of studious reflection upon all the data of our cognitive processes?

With the view then, of critically investigating the validity which the preceding spheres of knowledge profess to give, what *initial attitude* of mind must we reasonably adopt towards those different fields of naturally acquired knowledge?

5. We shall first enumerate and discuss briefly the chief initial attitudes of mind adopted by philosophers, some of which at least have resulted in wrecking all knowledge on the rocks of scepticism.

A. The attitude of **Universal Scepticism,** which professes to doubt really of all certainty, and the capability of the cognitive faculties to arrive at certainty, regarding all these departments of knowledge, and maintains that it is the highest wisdom either to doubt absolutely about everything (**radical universal scepticism**) or to concede that our knowledge at best can only be probable (**moderate universal scepticism**).

**Criticism.** *a.* The trouble with universal scepticism is that it is not thorough enough. It professes to doubt everything except its own foundations. Those foundations lie below the surface of its open professions of doubt. They are *implicitly* assumed as certain,

and adhered to with a firm assent. For instance, the sceptic gives implicitly his firm assent to his fundamental principle, namely, that "all knowledge is doubtful." With like firmness he assents implicitly to other principles which he uses as premises in his demonstrative attacks against the foundations of all knowledge. He admits, for example, as certain, the difference between truth and error, between knowledge and ignorance, between the meaning of different words. Universal scepticism is, therefore, self-contradictory because *it implicitly assents to what it explicitly denies.*

*b.* The universal sceptics are, of all men, the most credulous. They reject evidence and reason, and, therefore, naïvely believe what is not evident and reasonable. To approach the critical investigation of knowledge in that contradictory attitude of universal scepticism would obviously vitiate whatever conclusion may be arrived at with a like contradiction. Hence, as an initial attitude of mind, universal scepticism is ruled out, because it destroys the basis of all investigation, by casting doubt upon reason, the instrument of investigation, as well as upon truth and certainty, the goal of all research.

B. **Descartes (1596-1650).** Descartes attempted to discover a solid foundation for valid knowledge by approaching the entire body of his naturally acquired knowledge, in an attitude of absolutely **universal** and positive doubt (47). Descartes, however, did not seriously doubt all his previous knowledge with the intention of remaining in doubt, but intended to use his state of universal positive doubt in order to arrive ultimately at truth and certainty. This doubt, if not explicitly, was at least implicitly extended even to the objective validity of the "principle of contradiction" (Medit. I) and hence *to the capacity of his mind to know any-*

*thing as true and certain.* He called this initial attitude, "Universal Methodic Doubt."

**Criticism.** *a.* Should this initial attitude be adopted, we could never extricate ourselves from the slough of real doubt. Our cognitive faculties would be discredited and irremediably paralyzed from the start. All our efforts to investigate and criticise knowledge by means of already discredited faculties could have only one fatal result—universal scepticism. Even Descartes' famous first principle—*"cogito ergo sum,"* which he *himself deemed absolutely certain,* could not, at least *for him,* be certain; because his initial attitude of serious and positive doubt which applied to all knowledge, should logically extend also to this principle. He could not logically, at the stage in the development of his system, wherein he enunciated this principle, be certain either of his "Cogito" or his "Ergo sum." (Principles XIII-XXX. Part I.)

*b.* Descartes accepted his fundamental principle "Cogito, ergo sum," as absolutely certain because, as he substantially sets forth in Method, P. IV (ad fin.). "To that which I know clearly and distinctly I may assent, for that clear and distinct knowledge must be true follows from God's veracity." But at this stage of his system, Descartes had not yet proved the existence of God. He had not, therefore, any ground for the validity of "clearness and distinctness of ideas" as a criterion of truth. Ueberweg (Hist. of Phil. Vol. II, p. 60) makes the following remark on the logical consistency of Descartes' position: "By the aid of this same criterion, founded on the veracity of God, we have seen Descartes obliged to help out, his proof of God's existence; if the certainty of God's existence depends on a knowledge, whose certainty, in turn, depends on the existence of God, the argument moves undeniably in a

circle. This was correctly pointed out and censured by Hobbes."

C. **Kant (1724-1804).** Kant approached the criticism of our naturally acquired knowledge, in an attitude, which he expressed by the question, **"What can I know?"**

**Criticism.** *a.* If this question is asked by Kant regarding the capacity of the mind to know anything, at a moment antecedent to all exercise of its cognitive powers, any answer is utterly impossible. We could never tell what we can know, or what we can not know, unless we set our faculties to the task of knowing. As well ask, what kind of fruit an unknown tree will produce before it is observed to produce any.

*b.* If this question is put universally, without a shred of an exception, in an attitude of real doubt regarding *all the apparent* knowledge which we have previously acquired by the spontaneous exercise of our faculties, then Kant's attitude would be the same as Descartes'. He would then be obliged to make use of faculties in his investigations, whose functionings would be intrinsically vitiated by positive doubt from the very start. Of such an initial attitude universal scepticism would be the outcome and real doubt about the validity of the whole stock of his previous knowledge which he had naturally acquired.*

D. Some modern Scholastic Epistemologists adopt an initial attitude towards all our naturally acquired knowledge, which they call **Methodic Fictitious Doubt.** But "fictitious doubt" just because it is *ficti-*

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*Since this little book is written for students of Epistemology, who are also studying the History of Modern Thought, it was not deemed necessary to outline the entire Epistemological System of Descartes, Kant, etc.

*tious* is not a doubt at all. What is the use of professing it then, as an initial attitude of enquiry? One can understand *"real or positive doubt."* As an initial attitude of mind for the purpose of investigation, it is at least frank and sincere, even though it inevitably leads to scepticism. But "fictitious doubt!" It is real certitude. Why not profess openly, then, what one knows is his real state of mind, and not *try* to assume what he knows is fictitious?

6. In opposition to those sceptical attitudes of mind toward all of our spontaneously acquired knowledge, we shall now set forth by way of Contrast **The Attitude of Traditional Scholasticism.** This attitude of the great leaders among the schoolmen may be stated (1) negatively, and (2) positively.

(1) Negatively stated the schoolmen maintain that it is not possible, nor is it necessary to abstract from the truth and certainty of *all* our naturally or spontaneously acquired knowledge, either positively, negatively or fictitiously doubting it (methodic doubt in all its forms) in order that we may, by critical investigation, arrive at truth and certainty through methodic doubt of any kind. *It is not possible,* because if all our directly acquired knowledge is set up even in methodic doubt antecedently to all investigation, the only means we have to metamorphose that doubt into certainty is either demonstration or reflection.

It is obvious that it is not possible to arrive by demonstration at true and certain conclusions from dubious premises. From doubt of any kind nothing but doubt can be deduced.

It is equally obvious that reflection upon dubious knowledge, if it is not to be endless, must be arrested, if truth and certainty are to be acquired at all, by some true and certain knowledge that is attained directly or

intuitionally, and, therefore, independently of reflection. All knowledge ultimately rests on intuition, not on an intuition in the sense of a blind and motiveless instinct, but on immediately acquired knowledge grounded upon self-evidence. Hence some certain and true knowledge is independent of, and antecedent to, all demonstration and reflection. Reflective enquiry is not always a necessary condition of genuine certitude.

Even should we institute an enquiry or investigation with the view of justifying the certainty and validity of some truth, it is not necessary beforehand to doubt it in any way. I may be quite certain, relying upon the authority of reputable astronomical calculations, of the precise time a future eclipse of the sun will take place, yet, if I should myself possess a sufficient knowledge of mathematics and astronomy, I can verify for myself the certainty of that exact moment of the eclipse, without previously doubting, in any sense, the findings of the astronomers.

This attitude may be called dogmatic, but it is not naïve or irrational dogmatism, but an intelligent dogmatism, because it rests upon the ground of evidence.

*It is not necessary to doubt,* since that which we are in search of, namely, manifest evidence, is staring us in the face. It is difficult to understand why some minds seem fully satisfied with the truth and certainty of a pronouncement, if their perception of the agreement or disagreement between its subject and predicate proceed slowly through a series of intermediate steps through a process of demonstration or reflection, but will not be satisfied if the mind accomplishes the same perception by one single bound. They are like persons who will be sure they crossed a stream if they should do so by stepping-stones, but would not be sure of a like

feat, should they leap from bank to bank by one agile bound.

(2) Positively stated the scholastic attitude is, that natural or direct certainty which the mind spontaneously acquires independently of all philosophical reflection is genuine certainty, that is it is certainty not only true and reasonable in itself, but that it is the sole basis of philosophic certainty and of all sound human reasonings.

7. In establishing its position, scholasticism distinguishes between natural, direct or spontaneous certainty, and scientific or philosophical certainty.

In the case of natural or direct certitude the philosophically untrained mind, though genuinely certain of some truth, *is not explicitly aware* of the motives or reasons on which its certainty rests, and could not explain distinctly the reason why it is certain.

But in the case wherein philosophical or scientific certainty of a truth is had, the mind *is explicitly aware* of the motives or reasons of its certainty and could give a distinct account of them, if asked to explain why it is certain.

Scholastic philosophers maintain that both certitudes are (1) genuine and reasonable; (2) that natural certitude need not wait upon the corroboration of scientific or philosophical certitude to guarantee its legitimacy; (3) that scientific certitude is not essentially different from natural certitude; (4) that scientific certitude adds to natural certitude only the accidental quality of greater perfection; (5) that most people possess only natural certitude regarding all their knowledge, and all people have only natural certitude of most of their knowledge.

That natural certitude is genuine and is a common

endowment of many minds may be established by the following considerations:

Certitude in general is a state of mind which firmly adheres or assents to a truth without any fear of error. But such an assent is often possessed by the mind although it cannot distinctly and with reflex knowledge explain in so many words its reason or motives for its assent.

For our experience constantly testifies that men who do not profess to have any formal scientific or philosophical training, are (1) just as certain for instance, of their own existence as Descartes was, who professed to have arrived at the philosophic certainty of this truth after ten years of serious reflection. Ordinary men are certain of first principles, such as the principle of contradiction, identity and excluded middle, the axioms of geometry, the reality of the external world. (2) Certain also of the beauty of particular buildings, countenances and images; they know for certain that order is not the result of chance. Yet they cannot give distinct and explicit reasons for their certainty nor can they define philosophically, what beauty or order is. Nor is their certitude merely subjective, because they know it is determined by the fact that the contradictory of their assurance is excluded.

The attainment of genuine certitude by the direct and natural workings of the human mind is not confined to first principles and immediate judgments. Natural certitude also extends to the knowledge of truths of a higher order, to the acquisition of which, a process of reasoning is required. They are truths especially that regard the absolute needs of human life in its social, domestic, moral and religious relations. Instances of such truths are: "God exists, who will reward the virtuous and punish the wicked"; "the soul will survive the

body"; "there is an essential difference between good and evil"; "we ought to give to everyone his own." That these truths are known with certainty by men is merely an outcome of the established fact that all normally constituted minds are endowed with the gift of *natural logic* or reason. Men who hold these truths for certain may not be able to state explicitly the reasons on which they are based; they may not be able to answer the difficulties that may be advanced against them, still they are satisfied that they possess sufficient evidence to guarantee their firm adherence to them, and in their regard, "a thousand difficulties cannot make a doubt."

Hence it follows that it is not necessary, nor is it logically possible, without incurring the danger of scepticism, to surrender to doubt of any kind, that firm assent which the mind directly and spontaneously possesses by natural certitude, of first principles, and of many truths necessary for human well-being and human destiny which can be, and are arrived at, by the natural exercise of that demonstrative power which every normal human being possesses as an inborn endowment of his nature. Philosophical or scientific reflection can then come into play. And by the exercise of this reflective investigation and criticism the *implicit* motives and reasons by which natural certitude was determined can be made *explicit*. Such is the traditional scholastic method of enquiry with the view of arriving at philosophical certitude.

Maher in his criticism of Kant says: "The dogmatical standpoint is the only one which can be consistently maintained. We must from the beginning, under penalty of absolute scepticism and intellectual suicide, assume the capacity of the mind to attain real truth. Every attempt to demonstrate the veracity or

mendacity of our faculties must involve either a vicious circle or a contradiction. Thought, as Hegel argued, can only be scrutinized by thought, and to require a criticism of thought antecedently to the acceptance of its validity is like refusing to enter the water till we are able to swim." (Psychology p. 268, Edition 1905.)

Lotze says: "Every one, evade it as he will, must in the last instance, judge of every proposition submitted to him upon grounds of which the constraining force presses itself upon him with immediate assurance." I say, "in the last instance," for even when he undertakes to examine the self-evidence, his final affirmation or denial of it must always rest on the like self-evidence as belonging to his collected reasons for deciding on the matter. (II. Metaph. p. 17, 1887.)

8. Adopting, then, the dogmatic standpoint which is the traditional scholastic attitude of mind, we shall approach the solution of the questions involved in the following main divisions of our subject:

(a) What is the nature of truth in general? What are the different kinds of truth and the nature of each? What is falsity or error? What is the ultimate cause of error?

(b) What are the different states of mind with regard to logical truth, such as the states of doubt, certainty, opinion, etc.?

(c) What are the different means by which logical truth may be acquired, and how do we justify the validity of those means?

(d) What are the particular and immediate criteria or tests as well as the ultimate, and universal **Criterion** or standard by which Logical Truth is distinguished from falsehood?

9. This second part of Logic is called, like the first part, by different names:

(a) **Major Logic,** because of its very great importance. For unless we can reasonably justify the validity of human knowledge, then all science, religion and morality would be a myth or a dream, and the natural inclination of our minds to attain truth would be an illusion.

(b) **Material Logic,** because it has to do primarily with the *content* or *matter* of thought.

(c) **Critical Logic,** because it brings to bear upon the direct and natural knowledge, which the mind has already spontaneously acquired the searching scrutiny of reflection and analysis in order to vindicate, its previous validity, or it may be, in some exceptional cases, its invalidity.

(d) **Epistemology,** because it is the science or philosophy, of knowledge, that is, it professes to set forth the ultimate causes or reasons why human knowledge is valid.

(e) **Criteriology,** when it emphasizes the investigation of the criteria or tests by which truth is distinguished from falsehood.

**Epistemology** (the name which we shall adopt) is, then, that part of philosophy which gives, on reflection, a rational reassurance of the existence, the valid sources, the limits and the criteria or tests of true and certain knowledge.

10. *Consequences.* If the principles herein set forth are well-established, from them may be logically inferred the following consequences:

1. Since the human mind by the direct and spontaneous exercise of its cognitive powers does as a fact, acquire genuine and *natural certitude* of many truths antecedently to all scientific or philosophical reflection upon its direct deliverances, it follows that the mind is capable of knowing some truths with certainty.

*"Ab esse ad posse valet illatio."* Men do know things at "first thought," though they may not understand *why* they know things. The "why" is the outcome of "second thought."

2. Since reasoning necessarily involves ideas and judgments, and since it has been established that multitudes of men, even uncultured men, through the natural disposition to reason correctly (natural logic) with which they are endowed, do arrive at higher truths, as "the existence of God," etc., it follows that some at least of their ideas and judgments are objectively valid.

3. Hence we have clearly shown that those who deny or doubt the objective validity of ideas and judgments implicitly assert what they explicitly deny or doubt, and consequently contradict themselves.

4. In order that we may come to know a truth with philosophical certainty, it is not necessary first to doubt it. *Common sense* or the *sense of our common nature* ought to be accepted as a test of truth with respect, rather than with contempt, even by philosophy. *Common sense* is really the faculty of reason confined in its range to the discovery of truths of a *certain character,* namely, (1) to truths which are a necessity to human life and (2) accepted by all men during all ages and places. The value, however, of *"common sense"* as a test of truth and certainty does not alone come from the universal acceptance of the truths to which it testifies, but also from the *character* or *nature* of those truths. It is called "sense" not because it is not intellectual, but because it imitates *sense* in its shrewdness and perspicacity in arriving at its conclusions. Like sense it knows many truths with certainty, though it does not clearly understand *why* it knows them. It arrives at *natural* but not *philosophical* certainty, of the truths it discovers.

# CHAPTER I

## TRUTH AND FALSITY

### *Article I*

**The nature of truth in general—Different kinds of truth—The nature of each.**

11. **Truth** cannot be defined by a strictly essential definition because it is a transcendentally **simple** notion. Hence, it cannot be analyzed into a "genus" and "specific difference" strictly so called. The best we can do is to examine the meaning which men of all times have commonly attached to the term truth, and express in a brief statement the result of this examination.

We observe that men are wont to call (a) objects or things true, (b) words true, (c) thoughts true.

Men, therefore, acknowledge that in each of these expressions there is something *common,* namely, the "note" *true.* By analyzing then the meaning which men commonly attribute to the expressions, "things or objects are true," "words are true," "thoughts are true," we can discover the terms and grounds of the relations which enter into the exact sense which they attach to the terms "true," or "truth." For "true" and "truth" is, as we shall see, an essentially *relative term.*

Now, men say, "things or objects" are true, when they are in *conformity* or agreement with their thoughts or ideas of these things or objects. Men assert, for example, "This object is *true* gold," "Cicero is a *true* orator," "Joseph is a *true* friend," because the "object," "Cicero" and "Joseph," conform, or are in agreement

with their *thoughts or ideas* of "gold," "orator," "friend," respectively. Ultimately all things are in conformity with the ideas of them, which existed, from all eternity, in the mind of God.

Men say "words" are true, when they are in *conformity* with the thoughts of the speaker, and false when they are not in conformity with his thoughts.

Lastly, men say "thoughts" are true, when they are in *conformity and agree* with the objective order of things, false when this conformity or agreement is wanting.

Hence, there are three kinds of truth:

1. **Ontological** truth, or the truth of *things or reality.*
2. **Moral** truth, or the truth of *words or language.*
3. **Logical** truth, or the truth of *thoughts.*

*Critical Logic or Epistemology* has to do with **Logical Truth.**

Ontology has to do with **Ontological Truth.**

Ethics has to do with **Moral Truth.**

12. **Definition of Truth.** We are now in a position to understand the classical definition of "truth" in general, which according to St. Thomas, is "the conformity or agreement of the intellect with reality" (*"Per conformitatem intellectus et rei veritas definitur,"* Sum. I, q. 16, A. 2.), sometimes more briefly expressed as "the conformity of thought and thing."

13. In this latter definition "thought," which is taken in its proper and strict sense, signifies not an act or a product of any of the sensuous faculties, but an act, or the resulting product of an act of the spiritual faculty of intellect; an act and product of intelligence. Since

the acts of the intellectual faculty, as we have seen in Formal Logic, are simple apprehension, judgment and reasoning, it follows that thought always means, either an idea, concept or notion, which is the product of a simple apprehension, or of a judgment which is the outcome of a judicial act, whether that judgment is immediate, or as the result of reasoning, mediate, or a judgment based upon the authority of witnesses.

14. By **"reality or thing"** in the definition of logical truth is meant whatever may become an object of thought, whether that object *actually exists* independently of the thought of it, as "gold," "mountain," or in an object of thought that is *merely possible* of existence, as "a golden mountain," "characters of fiction," or what are called *entities of reason* (entia rationis), which, *as such,* are creations of mind, and *as such,* have no reality outside the mind, though we may think of them after the manner of real things, as "nothing," "darkness," "blindness," "reflex universals," "various relations." In a word, "reality or thing" means in the definition of truth, anything we can talk (reor) about, or of which we can predicate something. Hence, "reality" or "thing" in the definition of truth has a wider extension than actually existing things.

15. "Conformity or agreement." This "agreement" may be considered from the point of view of one or other of the terms between which the "agreement" or "conformity" exists, namely:

(1) The Intellect.
(2) And Reality or thing.

(1) From the point of view of the intellect, it is not meant that the *nature* of the intellect, or of the thought (viz., idea or judgment), which is likewise a spiritual "accident" resident within the intellect, is in

agreement with the *nature* of the thing, object or reality that is known. The intellect is a spiritual faculty, and its thought is likewise spiritual, and the reality known is frequently a material object. But there can be no agreement of *nature* between a spiritual faculty or a thought that is spiritual, and a material object, any more than there can be an agreement of nature between an angel and an ox. In the technical language of logicians the agreement between the intellect or its thought and object known, is not *entitative.*

What is meant by this "Conformity" or agreement is, that there is in the intellect a "form" or modification which is a *mental* or *spiritual representation,* not a material or photographic image, of the material object that is often represented. That is, the intellect is representative of a material object in the only way that is in harmony with the nature of the intellectual faculty. Since, then, the intellect is spiritual by nature, a truth we assume from Psychology, the representation of its object in the intellect is, and must be, a spiritual, and in no way, a material representation.

It is this mental spiritual image or representation that determines the intellect to know this object rather than that, or one aspect of an object rather than another. This representative "form" of the intellect is the "thought." This "thought" which, in the case of a simple apprehension is the "idea," and in the case of judgment, the perception of the agreement of difference between two objective ideas, is the medium between the intellect knowing and the reality known, a medium, however, which is not directly and immediately known in itself, as an object. As has been explained in Minor Logic, this medium, whether it is the idea or the judicial perception, is for the intellect a "sign" of the object, but a "sign" that is called *formal*

not *objective*. (F. L., pp. 30-31.) The agreement then, between the intellect knowing, and the reality known, is technically called an *intentional* or spiritually representative, not an *entitative*, agreement.

Hence, by "intellect" in the definition is meant not the bare intellect, but the intellect determined by, or furnished with, an idea in the case of simple apprehension, or by the perception of the agreement or disagreement between two objective ideas, in the case of judgment. It is the intellect in the attitude of knowing.

(2) Again, we may consider the definition of truth from the point of view of *reality* or *thing*. It is the irresistible conviction of all unbiased men, a conviction that forces itself upon us, that in our intellectual perception and thought we grasp an object or reality distinct from, and independent of our thought of it. There is reproduced in our mind a mental image of this objective reality, and it is by means of this mental or spiritual image that the mind is determined to direct its attention outward on reality and by a primitive act of thought grasp it intellectually. Hence knowledge is "the reproduction in the mind of objective reality" ("reproductio rei in mente"). This mental reproduction is the counterpart of the original reality. Hence, the truth of knowledge has ever been recognized as this perfect resemblance or conformity between our thought and objective reality, in so far as that reality or thing is known. This independence or reality, which is the term or object of thought, apart from the thought of it, is what is understood by the *objectivity* of knowledge in opposition to *subjectivism*, the principle of which is, that thought is not the intellectual apprehension of an objective world outside and independent

of us, but that, some how, objects are the creation of the thinking subject.

16. Moreover, since the knowledge of the human mind does not exhaust all that can be possibly known of its object, it is not meant that the intellect, in its act of knowing, agrees or conforms *adequately* and completely with all the "notes" of the reality known, but only *inadequately* and incompletely. Human knowledge, as far as it goes, is true or in conformity with reality, yet is never *adequate, complete, comprehensive.* Omniscience or comprehensive knowledge is an attribute of God alone.

17. Lastly, when we compare the part played by the intellect with that played by "reality" in the genesis of truth, "reality" is, in the case of logical truth or "truth of thought," the *measure,* and the intellect is the *measured,* whereas, in the case of ontological truth or the "truth of things," the intellect is the *measure* and "reality" is the *measured.* Hence, from the point of view of logical truth, realities are not what they are, because we *think* them so, but we think them so because they *are so.* Logical truth, then, called also the "truth of thought," the "truth of knowledge," "the truth of intellect," "conceptual truth," is briefly defined as the "conformity of the mind with *objective reality.*"

18. **Summary:** (*a*) The "conformity or agreement" spoken of in the definition of "truth" is not a material conformity, such as exists between a photograph and a person, but the thought is mentally representative (intentional) of the object; not *total* or *adequate,* but partial and inadequate; it obtains not between the thought and the *material object* as such, but between the thought and the material object viewed under that special aspect which is here and now represented in the mind (formal object).

(*b*) Since logical truth, as the name implies, is the truth of thought, it is said to be in thought *formally*, while it is said to be in things or objects *fundamentally*, because logical truth is grounded on objects, in the sense that things or objects have the power of generating truth in the mind. Logical truth is said to be in words or language as in "signs" of thought, in as much as words or language manifests to others true thought or knowledge. When applied, therefore, to "thought" and "language" or "signs," the idea of truth is *analogous*.

## *Article II*

## Adverse Conceptions of Logical Truth

19. Opposed to the scholastic conception of truth, which has hitherto been set forth, a conception in harmony with the judgments and convictions of men of education and of men of sound sense everywhere and at all times, namely that knowledge is representative of objective reality as it is in itself, and hence that reality is the *norm* and *measure* to which true knowledge conforms, are many other systems of knowledge, which have had, in modern times, their source in the principle of Descartes, who made consciousness, to the neglect of all other cognitive faculties, the beginning of all truth and certainty, thereby making "ideas" (i.e. subjective sensations, subjective supersensible concepts and states of consciousness) the only direct and immediate objects of knowledge to the rejection of all certainty of realities distinct from, and independent of, the knowing subject.

Those systems differ in detail, but all agree in this, that they are characterized by "subjectivism" of more

or less range, in opposition to "objectivism." Chief among those theories are:

*I.* **Idealism** which defines truth in terms of the only data which idealism admits, as "the consistency of thought with thought." For idealism rests on two fundamental principles, though the first seems to imply the second, namely, that (*a*) the direct and immediate objects of all knowledge are within the mind, and that (*b*) the mind can never by means of its ideas, transcend itself, and hence cannot know any reality distinct from, and independent of, itself.

(*a*) Some idealists, of the less rigid or moderate school, profess to demonstrate by reasoning from the subjective data of their direct and immediate knowledge the existence of realities distinct and apart from those data, and thus make concessions of more or less range to "objectivism." How it is possible to deduce logically from premises, whose content is purely subjective, a conclusion whose content is objective and expressive of an actually existing reality, outside and independent of the mind, is difficult to understand. Premises that are subjective in content can bring forth conclusions that are likewise only subjective in content. Yet Descartes, Berkeley, Locke, and even Kant attempted, from purely subjective data, to demonstrate the existence of independent realities in the objective order.

(*b*) The more rigid idealists, arguing more logically from both principles of idealism, are thoroughgoing "subjectivists." They deny dogmatically or sceptically doubt, or profess agnostically not to know anything about, the objective existence of any reality outside the individual Ego and its modifications (solipsism). The whole external universe is a vision of the beholder, that is a projection of his own idea. (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer.)

It is a remarkable fact, made manifest by the history of philosophical thought, that any system that denies the conception of truth as set forth by scholasticism, which maintains the independent existence of both material and spiritual realities as distinct from the thought of them, has ultimately developed into pantheism or monism, materialistic or idealistic.

20. **Criticism: Thesis—Idealism is Impossible as a Fact and Contradictory in its Teaching.**

*1°*. Impossible—Men may profess idealism, that is doubt or deny, or assert they do not know, that their ideas and their knowledge are representative of objective and independent reality. But nobody was ever *abidingly* convinced of it. For the abiding convictions of men are best known by their actions, not by their professions. Observe their actions. They speak to other men, they write and publish books, they explain and try to demonstrate what they believe to be truths. But such actions would only become maniacs who stare at their own ideas or at their projections, did not idealists themselves implicity assume, that other people, and books, and the demonstrated truths, for instance of geometry, were realities independent of themselves.

*2°*. Contradictory—Like the universal sceptics, idealists implicity assert, what they explicitly profess to deny:

(*a*) The idealists profess to deny that the mind can know realities distinct from its own acts. But by this profession or confession they implicitly assert that they know the calibre and nature of their own mind, of their past and future acts, all of which are surely realities of some kind, quite distinct from the acts or thoughts that give information about each of them. Hence idealists implicitly admit many realities in practical life, which they explicitly profess to deny in theory.

(*b*) Idealists are sticklers for the validity of consciousness in revealing *internal facts*. But internal facts as objects of consciousness are distinct from, and independent of, the act of reflection by which they are known. Hence they implicitly confess that mental acts are capable of *transcending* themselves.

(*c*) All physical science to idealists would be an illusion. Yet the physical sciences are on the side of realism.

(*d*) Idealism would obviously destroy all religion and morality.

Why is it, we may ask, that the combined efforts, and accumulated arguments of idealists, have never succeeded in convincing any considerable body of men, educated or otherwise, that the real existence of bodies outside of them is either an illusion or doubtful?

Men have freely and promptly divested themselves of other illusions of long standing, when conclusive arguments were set forth to disprove those illusions. Men for centuries accepted the illusions that the world was flat; that the sun moved round it. Those beliefs yielded to arguments, which men everywhere judged to be valid. But men universally remain as incorrigible as ever in their judgment that bodies really exist, and are the determining cause of their sensations, notwithstanding the arguments of idealism. Why did men so meekly yield in the one case and continue so persistently stubborn in the other? The only reasonable answer is that realism is the outcome of their rational nature, while idealism has not, and cannot be, demonstrated as true. Yet the burden of proof rests with the idealists.

21. *II.* **Pragmatism.** Pragmatism is an idealistic system. Hence knowledge for the pragmatists gives no insight into objective reality. Pragmatism knows no such reality. Pragmatic knowledge, like idealistic

knowledge, is only thought considered as a psychical fact, ever evolving, ever changing, never fixed or absolute. What is accepted as true by one generation or race may be rejected as false by a succeeding generation or by another contemporary race. Hence pragmatism not only accepts the idealistic standpoint, but it adds to thought (ideas, judgments and reasoning) the feature of *relativity*. Thought is, then, only a function or action of the mind, as digestion is a function of the stomach. Both are non-cognitive of any reality distinct from themselves.

Just, then, as we cannot apply "true" or "false" in the traditional sense, to digestion, so neither can we, in any sense apply "true" or "false" to thought. But as we can say that digestion is "good" or "bad" so we can only say thought is "good" or "bad." Pragmatism then must eliminate from language the terms "true" and "false" as having no intelligible meaning, or metamorphose their ordinary meaning into "good" and "bad." Hence, pragmatism subverts *intellect* and puts *will* in its place. For while it preserves the words "true" and "false," it attributes to them not an intellectual, but a voluntaristic meaning. Hence, the pragmatics say that *thought is true, when, as a present hypothesis, it works out well, and so long as it works well,* not, however, for the good of the *individual,* but for men in general, that is for *society.*

In other words thought is true (i.e. *good*), so long as it is "a useful good" which conduces to the attainment of an end or purpose.

22. **Criticism.** 1. Like idealism and scepticism, pragmatism is self-contradictory in as much as it implicitly acknowledges what it explicitly denies.

It explicitly asserts, among other doctrines, that the mind can never attain any insight into reality, and that

knowledge is never absolute but relative and transformable. Yet the pragmatists in the same breath assert implicitly at least that they possess a thought that they are aware of what the *nature* "of a true thought" is, namely, "thought that works out well," and that they profess to know what the ultimate purpose of human life is, otherwise how could they judge that a thought conduced to attain it. But surely to know that the mind *possesses a thought,* to know the *nature* of thought and the ultimate purpose of human life are pieces of *absolute* and not relative or transformable knowledge. Furthermore, since the pragmatists profess to know the ultimate purpose of life, otherwise it would be impossible to judge the *usefulness* of any immediate thought as an instrument to attain it, that ultimate purpose of life, just because it is ultimate and cannot be judged as useful to attain any other purpose beyond it, escapes the net of their criterion of truth. Since thought is in itself at least a *reality,* hence pragmatists implicitly profess to have an insight into some reality. Finally to profess to know what the *nature* of thought truly is, is to be implicitly aware of something that is *absolute.*

*2.* Let the pragmatic test or criterion of truth be, for the moment, granted. What consequences will follow? Then all judgments, not only at present moment, but also during the generations that may have to elapse before the usefulness of those judgments are to be tested by experience, are at best only a conjecture, a guess or a gamble in their truth. They may hit or miss the attainment of the proposed ends. At present, then, and it may be for a considerable time, the untried judgments are accepted in blind, because motiveless faith, that is, in an attitude of *utter credulity.* Hence every present judgment is accepted not as true, but as possibly true or false, not as a certitude therefore, but

as a sceptical credulity. Hence pragmatism is only the nearest approach to the oldest philosophical errors—universal scepticism.

*3.* Since pragmatism is confessedly idealistic and implicitly at least sensistic, because it denies all genuine universal ideas and principles, and surrenders all possibility of ever knowing that there is a God, or any supersensible truth as a reality, it follows that its interests and purposes are confined to the narrow sphere of the humanistic and temporal, to the exclusion of what is divine and eternal. Hence, man is exclusively not only the centre, but "the measure of all things," a principle which, from a religious point of view, casts serious suspicion upon the whole system of pragmatism, and forfeits for pragmatism that progress in philosophical thought which it boastfully proclaims, by its return to the philosophy of Protagoras.

23. *III.* **Relativism or the Relativity of Knowledge.** This theory has a variety of meanings. We are now interested in that phase of it which conflicts with the traditional conception of truth.

The theory of relativity is the logical offspring of subjectivism supplemented and strengthened in recent years, by the theory of evolution. Its *subjective* character is manifested in its fundamental principle, that all thought, and more especially philosophical and religious thought which it furtively calls "truths," are no longer the mental reproduction of objectively existing realities, but a creation or product of the mind, wherein thought and reality are not mutually distinct but are identically the same. Hence what we know are only appearances (phenomena) not things-in-themselves (noumena). Since purely subjective thoughts, then, determined and motived as they are by wholly subjective factors, such as subjective needs, interests, feelings, temperament,

and since those subjective factors are ever subject to change, it inevitably follows, that the subjective thought of today may change into its contradictory tomorrow, and the opinions of races and peoples of one period of history may be transformed into their opposites or contradictories in another period of their history. Hence the human mind cannot know anything that is fixed or absolute. All knowledge is relative. This theory of the relativity of knowledge is manifestly corroborated by the modern theory of evolution, which its votaries apply not only to the physical, but also to the intellectual, religious and moral order. Hence evolution assumes that the principles and convictions that were once true, because suitable to the subjective needs of nations, or races, or individuals while in a lower order of development, must give way to new and more progressive principles and convictions when those peoples and races have reached, in the process of evolution, a higher order of development. Hence the relativists will maintain that truth of the proposition that "two plus two make four" is not determined or measured by any fixed or absolute objective relation between "two plus two" and "four," but that this relation is determined wholly by the present structure of the mind, which, in the course of its evolution, may be so altered and transformed, that it may be compelled to think that "two plus two make five." Like

> "The dog so altered in its taste
> Quits mutton bones on grass to feast,"

so the constitution of the mind may be so altered, that what at one time seemed true, may, in its newly modified state, seem positively false. Such a theory would be, of course, not only in direct conflict with the

scholastic conception of truth, but would absolutely destroy all knowledge.

24. **Criticism.** *1.* There is a true sense in which all human knowledge may be said to be relative. (1) As was pointed out in the explanation of the definition of logical truth, all human knowledge of any objective reality is not adequate or exhaustive, but only inadequate and limited. And this limitation of human knowledge is a necessary consequence arising from the limitation in number and range of our cognitive faculties. We know of objects only in part, that is, just as much as our limited faculties reveal them to us. Hence if we contrast what we know of objects with what may be possibly known of them, our knowledge is relative. Again, our knowledge of realities may be at first very meagre, indistinct and probable, and may subsequently by experience and study become wider, distinct and certain. Hence the knowledge of youth is relative to the more fully developed knowledge of maturer years.

(2) But it is the height of absurdity to say that the same judgment, for instance, that "A personal God exists" is true and not be denied in one age, and not true and ought to be rejected in another age, that "Christ is God" and "the church which He founded is infallible" are to be admitted and true during one period of history and ought to be rejected as false in a succeeding period. For those judgments are in themselves either true or false. If true in themselves, they are true forever, fixed and absolute; if false in themselves, they should never have been admitted.

*2.* The relativity of knowledge in its modern sense, is only a new name for an old error—universal scepticism an attitude of mind towards truth which, as we have shown is impossible and self-contradictory. *The*

*very assertion of the relativists that all knowledge is relative is in itself a piece of absolute knowledge.*

*3.* The charge is often brought by relativists that the absolute and fixed truths and the immutable dogmas of the Catholic Church are drag-chains on the feet of intellectual progress.

Progress by all means, but what are the laws of progress? True conservatism is substantial progress; it holds fast to what is true in order to advance to what is true. To reject anything that is valuable lessens the power of gaining more. That a thing is new does not commend it; that it is old does not discredit it. Progress, then, does not consist in rejecting what is old and in adopting what is opposed to it, but in adding to our stock of knowledge, and understanding more deeply and distinctly what we knew before only superficially and obscurely. "The art of nations," says Ruskin, "is cumulative, just as science and history are; the work of living men not superseding but building itself on the work of the past." So it is with progress in truth.

## *Article III*

### In What Acts of the Mind Are Logical Truth and Falsity Found?

25. Logicians distinguish three cognitive acts of the mind or intellect, simple apprehension, judgment and reasoning. Now in an act of reasoning we distinguish the *process* of reasoning from the judgments which constitute its matter, and from the new judgment, which that process reaches, and in which it terminates.

By the process we mean the progressive march of

the mind in inferring one judgment from other judgments. This process, as such, we cannot characterize as *true* or *false,* because it is not representative of any reality distinct from itself. We can apply to it only the terms *valid* or *invalid,* in so far as it conforms to the laws and canons of reasoning.

Hence, when investigating, in what acts of the mind logical truth is found, we do not enquire whether logical truth is found in the *process* of reasoning, but whether truth is found in the *judgments* that enter into and are the result of that process. Since reasoning, then, as a process, is outside the enquiry, the question is confined to apprehension and judgment alone.

In the first place, then, we resolve that question regarding simple apprehension in the following theses:

### Thesis I. In Simple Apprehension, as Such, Logical Truth is Found

26. *Explanation of terms.* "Simple Apprehension" is an act by which the mind lays hold of an object mentally, without affirming or denying anything about it." (Cf. Formal Logic, pp. 11-14.)

Simple apprehension may be applied to sensuous as well as to an intellectual knowledge. In this thesis and in the definition just given, it is restricted to intellectual knowledge. This restriction is expressed in the definition, by the words "mind" and "mentally."

Apprehension is called "simple," to distinguish it from an act of judgment. Unlike a judgment, a simple apprehension never affirms or denies anything of the object that is consciously before the mind.

27. The analysis of a simple apprehension reveals four aspects of its nature, which it will be well to set forth distinctly, in order to come to a decision as to

whether logical truth may, in any sense, be verified of this first act of the mind.

There is first the mental or *subjective* side of the apprehensive act. This aspect of simple apprehension is expressed in the definition by the words, "an act of the mind" (F. L., p. 11), and indicates *the first term of the equation* in logical truth.

There is also in simple apprehension an *objective* side, expressed in the above definition by the words, "lays hold of an object." By this objective aspect of apprehension is emphasised *the second term of the equation* in logical truth. For simple apprehension always places before the mind some object that is independent of, and distinct from the subjective act of intelligence.

Thirdly, because simple apprehension is an act of intelligence, the mind, when furnished with it, is made consciously aware of some object. Lastly, a simple apprehension, considered as an act subjective to the mind, must be *representative* of the object here and now before the mind, otherwise the mind could not be aware of the definite object presently before it, rather than any other object.

28. This analysis is vindicated by the direct and primary meaning of the different synonyms for simple apprehension, which are found in common language. Besides "simple apprehension," this first act of the mind is also called, "concept," "notion," and "idea." They all mean the same thing, yet, at the same time each of these names emphasises some one phase or aspect of that same thing which the others do not.

"Concept," which properly and primarily means what is spiritually generated (concipere) within the mind, emphasises and rivets the attention upon the first term of the equation—"thought," "apprehension," which stresses the act of laying hold of some object, emphasises

the second term of the equation—"thing" or "reality." "Idea," which strictly means a mental image or likeness of an object, emphasises the *representative* aspect of the simple apprehension, while "notion," which primarily suggests that the mind is *notified* or made aware of an object distinct from the mere idea of it, emphasises the fact that simple apprehension is a cognition or an act of knowledge of some kind.

29. *The problem which the Thesis professes to answer.* Now the problem which the thesis professes to answer is, granted that the simple apprehension subjectively considered (concept) faithfully represents (idea) its object (apprehension) and that the mind is consciously aware (notion) of that object, and that there is, therefore, set up an equation or agreement between the representing mind and the represented object, can ths equation or agreement be called logical truth? Or can the classical definitions of logical truth be verified, in any legitimate way, of this equation?

Now, it so happens that Aristotle and St. Thomas, who are regarded as defining logical truth in a way that has commended itself to the sane philosophical world, have, in *some passages* of their writings, so defined logical truth that their definition cannot be verified in the case of Simple Apprehension, but only in the case of judgment. St. Thomas, who follows Aristotle, for instance, says: "Intellectual (logical) truth consists in the equation between the mind and reality, in consequence of which the mind affirms that the object is that which it really is, or denies it to be what it really is not." (Rickaby Contra Gentes, L. I. C., 59.)

It is obvious that if logical truth is always to measure up to this definition, it can never be found in simple

apprehension, from the nature of which all affirmation and negation are excluded.

In other passages, however, of Aristotle and St. Thomas, the definition of logical truth is so modified, that, all mention of affirmation or negation is excluded. Such a definition can be verified in the case of simple apprehension. It is this last minimum definition that the vast majority of logicians have accepted as embodying the essential nature of logical truth. It may be thus expressed—"The conformity of the mind with its object." (Cf. Urraburu, Logic, pp. 419-421.)

Difficulties against the Thesis arise also from another direction.

It may well be asked, is the mind capable of so arresting its natural impulse of curiosity to know, as to remain in a state of simply apprehending an object; or must it, as soon as a simple apprehension is formed, perforce proceed to form a judgment of some kind?

Suarez and others hold that it must. Dr. Coffee gives expression to this view. He says—"When I investigate any object of sense experience, any individual thing, *'hoc aliquid,'* by apprehending in it, and abstracting from it, through repeated acts of conception, the ideas *tree, trunk, branches, leaves, green, rough, large*, etc., I simultaneously refer or attribute these concepts to the individual sense—datum from which I derive them: that is to say . . . I *judge* that it is all that it represents. *Thus it is that judgment goes hand in hand with, and is naturally inseparable from, the conception or simple apprehension of abstract ideas.*"

But this does not settle the question. Because, even should it be conceded that "judgment" goes hand in hand with, and is naturally inseparable from the conception or simple apprehension of the above subject ("an individual thing—*hoc aliquid*") and the simple

apprehension of any of the above predicates, still the act by which the subject is simply apprehended is *really* distinct from the act by which the predicate is simply apprehended, and also from the act, by which the "nexus" between the subject and its predicate is perceived and asserted. Hence, notwithstanding the conceded simultaneity of simple apprehension and judgment, those mental acts always remain really distinct. Therefore, we can enquire whether a simple apprehension *as such* is, in any legitimate sense, endowed with logical truth.

Granted, then, that simple apprehension, in itself, is really distinct from a judgment, the issue in the controversy is simply this—is the mere conformity of the simple apprehension, which admittedly represents faithfully its object, with the object thus represented, sufficient to constitute the essence of logical truth, or must the added perfection of having that conformity *known* by the mind as it is in a judgment, enter also as an essential element into logical truth? St. Thomas and the vast majority of scholastic philosophers are agreed that *"Conformity"* alone of the mind or thought with its object is sufficient. Hence the

### Proof

30. Where there is a conformity of mind (concept) with its object, there logical truth is found.

But in the case of simple apprehension, there is conformity of mind (concept) with its object.

. . . in the case of simple apprehension logical truth is found.

*Proof of the Major.* The major is the commonly accepted definition of logical truth.

*Proof of the Minor.* There is conformity of mind

(concept) with its object, when the mind (intellect) is furnished with a mental representation of its object.

But when a simple apprehension resides in the mind, the mind is furnished with a mental representation of its object.

. . . when a simple apprehension resides in the mind, there is conformity of mind with its object, that is, there is logical truth in the mind (intellect).

## Thesis II. Simple Apprehension, as Such, Cannot be False

31. Explanation of terms.

"As such." In so far as the definition of simple apprehension is strictly verified and is not overstepped, and therefore not implying an explicit or implicit judgment.

"False"—*Falsity* as the opposite of truth, may be defined in the same terms as truth. Hence *logical falsity* is the "positive difformity or disagreement of thought with thing." The difformity of thought and thing may be either *positive* or *negative.*

*Negative difformity* is that difformity or disagreement of the intellect and the thing which obtains, when the intellect has no knowledge at all of an object (ignorance pure and simple) or when the intellect in its thought does not represent all the "notes" in the object. Negative difformity is, therefore, either blank *ignorance* or a *limitation of knowledge.* Negative difformity in as far as it is a limitation of knowledge, is consistent with truth. Hence, we say that simple apprehension cannot be false, we do not mean *negative difformity.*

*Positive difformity* between thought and its object is present, when the mind attributes to the object or denies of the object that which ought not to be attributed to

it or denies of it. For instance, if I see a glittering substance which is not gold, and I judge it is gold, then I have error or positive difformity between thought and its object.

This is the kind of logical difformity we say, cannot be found in a simple apprehension.

32. Statement of Thesis. We assert, in the thesis, that in the simple apprehension, as such, there is always an absence of *positive difformity,* in other words, "what is apprehended is so far truly apprehended that it cannot be otherwise. The object before the mind must, of course, be the object before the mind; just as what a man sees, with his eyes that he sees, even though he should by mistake in inference (interpretation) proceed to name it wrongly." (Richaby, First Prin., p. 16.)

### Proof

Simple apprehension cannot be positively false, if the mind, when furnished merely with a simple apprehension, attributes nothing to the object which ought not to be attributed to it, and denies nothing of it which ought not to be denied of it.

But the mind, when furnished merely with a simple apprehension, attributes nothing to the object which ought not to be attributed to it, and denies nothing of it which ought not to be denied of it.

Therefore the mind, when furnished merely with a simple apprehension, cannot be positively false.

Major—is evident from the nature of positive falsity.

Minor—follows, because the simple apprehension is not a judgment.

33. **Summary.**

*a.* Therefore simple apprehension is, *of its own nature,* always, true.

*b.* Simple Apprehension may, however, be false *"accidentally,"* in three ways:

1. Simple Apprehension may be the occasion of a false judgment.
2. Simple Apprehension may involve the result of a previously false judgment.
3. A judgment that is false may, through an *abuse* of language be called an idea.

## *Article IV*

The way in which logical truth is found in simple apprehension, in contrast with the way it is found in judgment, is set forth in the following thesis:

### Thesis III. Logical Truth Is Found Imperfectly in Simple Apprehension, Perfectly in Judgment

34. Explanation of terms.

"Logical truth," as we have seen, essentially consists in "the conformity between thought and thing." Thought is the outcome of an act of intellect or intelligence, and always involves knowledge of some kind. Knowledge is the reproduction of an object in the mind ("reproductio rei in mente.") "Simple Apprehension" and "judgment" are defined as before. (Formal Logic, p. 11 and p. 35.)

"Imperfectly."—In general a thing is imperfect when it is *not* (*im*) *thoroughly* (*per*) *made or finished* (*facio*) that is, when it falls short, owing to a lack of certain qualities or characteristics, of its full rounded development. A crystal, for instance is imperfect, when some of its facets are either altogether wanting or are not fully formed. Now such a crystal, though

imperfect, would yet be justly called a crystal, because it possesses the essence of a crystal.

In like manner, simple apprehension is logically true, because the bare essence at least of logical truth is present in it. For, a simple apprehension or idea always faithfully represents its object (Theses I-II); hence is the essence of logical truth, "The conformity of thought and thing," always verified in it. A simple apprehension or idea, is however lacking those characteristics of logical truth, which always must accompany its complete development and full rounded perfection. Because of the absence of these characteristics from simple apprehension, in it logical truth is said to be "imperfect."

"Perfectly."—Not only is the bare essence of logical truth present in a judgment, but in a judgment, as we shall presently show, this essence is, besides, furnished with those characteristics which constitute the full perfection of logical truth. For this reason logical truth is said to be "perfect" in the act of judgment.

35. What, then, are those characteristics of logical truth which are present in a judgment and absent from simple apprehension, and how shall we discover them?

The only way open to us for the discovery of those characteristics is to reflect upon, and analyze that concept of logical truth, which the representative philosophical minds of all ages have agreed upon as embodying its full perfection, and then, to verify our findings by an appeal to consciousness as it manifests itself, both in an act of simple apprehension and judgment.

Let us now examine, with the philosophers, what constitutes the concept of perfect logical truth, and then ask whether these requisites are found both in simple apprehension or in judgment alone.

Now all agree that logical truth is an attribute that is predicated, not of the object or reality which the mind knows, but of the thought or knowledge in the mind of the object or reality known. This is the meaning of the word "logical." Hence logical truth is also called "intellectual truth," the "truth of thought," "conceptual truth."

The vast majority of philosophers agree that the essence of logical truth consists in "the Conformity of thought with thing." "Conformity" is a relative term, and implies that there is an agreement or equation between two terms—the thought-term on the side of the mind, and the object-term distinct from and independent of the thought of it. Logical truth essentially consists in the relation of conformity between two terms.

In the case of simple apprehension as such, this conformity is really present, that is, the mind is set up, or constituted a *true thing,* and the conformity is awaiting the recognition by the mind as an *object* of its conscious awareness.

But as yet this conformity is not *possessed* as a piece of conscious knowledge by the mind. The thought-term and object-term yet stand apart. Upon the conformity between them the light of conscious intelligence has not yet flashed. The conformity between the thought and its object *is not known.*

In judgment, on the contrary, the relation of conformity, which in simple apprehension was awaiting as an object capable of being known, is, in the judicial act, *now known,* and enters as a conscious possession of the mind's knowledge. The flash of recognition of the conformity between the thought and the thing has passed between those two terms. The mind not only *holds* the conformity between the

thought-term and the object-term, but it *possesses it*, is aware of it as part of its conscious knowledge.

The main reason, then, why it is said, that logical truth if found *perfectly* in judgment and *imperfectly* in simple apprehension is precisely this, that in judgment the conformity or equation between "thought" and "thing" is consciously possessed as knowledge, in simple apprehension *it is not*.

That this analysis of the attitude of the mind towards the relation of conformity in logical truth in simple apprehension and judgment is not gratuitous, will be borne out by an introspective examination of the data of consciousness which an act of simple apprehension and judgment will respectively reveal.

36. *I.* **As to Simple Apprehension.** *a.* In the first place consciousness reveals that there is between a simple apprehension or idea in the mind a faithful conformity or resemblance with its object, because it is of the very nature of an idea to represent faithfully its object. I look through my window, for instance, and form an apprehension, no matter how at present, of one of its qualities—"transparent." That apprehension faithfully conforms to its object, and therefore in it is logical truth in its essence.

*b.* The conformity, however, between the apprehension or thought (for apprehension is thought or knowledge of some kind) and the apprehended object is only a "de facto" not a *consciously cognised* conformity. The reason for this lack of consciously recognising the conformity in question, is that though the mind, when furnished with an apprehension, say of "transparent," knows indeed something about *an* object, yet it does not, in the mere act of apprehension, know in what object "transparent" is; were the mind consciously aware in what object "transparent" is,

then the act elicited would be "ipso facto" a judgment not a simple apprehension.

37. *II.* **As to Judgment.** In an act of judgment, consciousness reveals the following facts:

(*a*) When the mind forms the judgment, "My window is transparent," it refers the whole content of the mind's knowledge, that is the mental synthesis of subject and predicate, the thought-term in the equation of logical truth, to objective reality. For, when I judge and assert, "My window is transparent," I do not mean that my "idea of my window is an idea of transparency," which would not be true, but I mean that "a real window distinct from, and independent of, my idea of it, is a real objective transparent thing." My mind's attention in this case, is not riveted on something within my mind, but on a real object outside and independent of my mind.

(*b*) But I could not intelligently refer my mental synthesis of the subject and predicate idea to objective reality unless I profess to be conscious, that is profess to know implicitly, in the judicial act, *the conformity of my mental synthesis with objective reality.* It is to this conformity, I give my *assent* or it may be my *belief.* It is in this *conscious awareness of the conformity* between my mental synthesis of subject and predicate ideas with something distinct from, and independent of, the act of synthesis, that logical truth is perfected.

38. Summing up, then, the reports of consciousness in an act of simple apprehension and in an act of judgment we arrive at the following striking contrasts:

(1) In simple apprehension the mind *never* refers its knowledge, that is the thought-term in the equation of logical truth to *anything* distinct from, and independent of, the act of apprehension itself. In a judgment,

on the contrary, the mind *always* refers its knowledge or the thought-term in the equation of logical truth, that is its subjective synthesis of subject and predicate ideas, to *something* distinct and independent of its act of synthesis, be that something either an actual or possible reality, or it be, what philosophers call an "ens rationis."

(2) In a judgment the conformity of thought with thing is known; in simple apprehension, though this conformity obtains, yet it is not known. For in the very act (in actu exercito) or referring its thought to some object, the intellect in a judgment perceives and assents to the agreement of its thought with some object. And it could not perceive and assent intelligently to what it *does not profess to know* or is not implicitly conscious of. In a simple apprehension there is no perception on or assent to the agreement of thought with thing, hence that agreement is not known.

(3) A restfulness or repose of mind in the conscious possession of truth is an additional characteristic of judgment, but not of simple apprehension.

## Proof

39. *I.* **Logical truth is found imperfectly in simple apprehension.**

Where the conformity between thought and thing, though present, is not yet consciously cognise, there logical truth is found imperfectly.

But in simple apprehension the conformity between thought and thing though present, is not consciously cognised. Therefore—

Major—A *de facto* conformity between thought and thing is not as perfectly a conformity as a *de facto* conformity that is likewise consciously known or cognised.

But in simple apprehension there is at best only a

*de facto* conformity between thought and thing. Therefore—

Minor—Consciousness alone can reveal what, in a cognitive act, is known.

But consciousness in simple apprehension does not reveal that the conformity between thought and thing is known. Therefore—

40. *II.* **Logical truth is found perfectly in judgment.**

Where the conformity between thought and thing is consciously cognised there logical truth is found perfectly.

But in an act of judgment the conformity between thought and thing is consciously cognised. Therefore—

Major—By example—If I should have a dollar in my pocket and not know that I had it, I would not be said to possess that dollar *per*fectly. I could make no use of it. If I not only had the dollar, but knew that I had it, I would possess it perfectly. In like manner, when in a judgment, there is not only present the conformity between thought and thing, but the mind also knows that conformity, then is that conformity or logical truth perfectly possessed.

Minor—In a judgment the mind perceives and asserts the conformity between thought and thing.

But what the mind perceives and asserts it must know. Therefore—

## *Article V*

### In What Act of the Mind Is Falsity or Error Found? The Chief Occasions of Falsity or Error

41. It has been proved that simple apprehension cannot be false. Yet alas! falsity or error is a fact. Falsity or error, therefore, implies an act of judgment.

Error is an assent to a false judgment, and a false judgment is one which disagrees with reality, or asserts that is, which really is not, or that is not, which really is. Hence, there is always in error a *positive difformity* of thought with thing.

But when falsity creeps into judgment, it always does so under the appearance of truth. For the intellect is made for truth as the will for good. It cannot by its very nature consciously assent to falsity. If left to itself and to the object it cannot be led into error. *The object cannot of itself deceive.* It is incapable of minimizing or exaggerating its own evidence. The object, left to itself, will faithfully present itself to the intellect as evident or not evident. If evident the judgment regarding it will be true. If not evident, no judgment that is determined by evidence can follow, because there is no objective motive to determine the assent of the mind. *Nor can the intellect be its own deceiver.* Because not being itself a free agent, the intellect cannot determine itself to assent to error. Nor can the object, as we have seen, move it to err. The only power then we can conceive which exerts its influence to move the intellect to elicit a false judgment is the *will.* A false judgment is indeed an act elicited by the intellect, but when the intellect does err, it may truly say "a stranger hath done this," that is, a cause outside or extrinsic both to the object and the intellect, namely, the *will.* Hence, the will, and not the object nor the intellect itself, is the proximate cause of erroneous judgments. That the will may move the intellect to elicit an erroneous judgment, the following conditions are required:

1. There must be a lack of sufficient evidence in the case.
2. The error must masquerade under the *ap-*

*pearance of truth,* otherwise the intellect could not act at all, because it would not have any formal object to determine it.

3. The error must present itself as an *apparent good,* otherwise the will could not act, because it would lack its own formal object —good to solicit it.

42. What then are the chief *occasions* which solicit the will, so that the will in turn sways the intellect to acquiesce in error? The chief occasions of error are:

1. Prejudices (pre-judgments), *i. e.,* fixed judgments upon a subject which are formed antecedently to a due examination of the evidences in the case. (a) Such judgments on social, moral, religious and political subjects, not rooted in evidence, are propagated in books of science, histories, novels, newspapers, magazines, by orators, preachers, teachers. A certain passivity of thought on the part of readers and audiences is a favorable disposition for their unquestioned acceptance.

(b) The blind acceptance of opinions that prevail in one's country, nation, race and family. Hence arise national religion national philosophies that are mutually contradictory.

(c) The undue domination of a passion to gain social position or momentary advantages so influence the will, that it deflects the intellect from examining the evidence for one's plain duty.

(d) Drifting with the unreflecting crowd. It is pleasanter to follow the broad

way of thoughtlessness with the multitude than to tread the narrow way of wisdom with the few.

2. Certain wholesome impulses of our rational nature which urge us to seek the truth, are abused by too great eagerness and precipitancy.
   (a) The natural impulses to seek the causes of observed facts and happenings is often abused by overstepping or falling short of the evidence. Hence the many forms of ancient and modern superstitions, the idolatry of the ancient world, the acceptance of conjectural theories and hypothesis for scientifically certain conclusions, in general the fallacies of "non causa pro cause," and "post hoc ergo propter hoc."
   (b) The abuse of the natural tendency of the mind to reduce all things to unity, partially accounts for the false doctrine of Pantheism and Monism.
   (c) The abuse of the tendency of the mind to reproduce in pictures of the imagination (phantasms) whatever we conceive in thought. This tendency may easily lead to the false principle that we cannot understand what we cannot imagine; to the error of anthropmorphism, which falsely teaches that the only concept we can form of God is derived from magnifying our own image.
   (d) A slavish acquiescence to the authority

of those who are reputed learned. "The weakest of all arguments is that of human authority"—(St. Thomas I. Q. I. art. VIII-ad. 2).

3. Neglect of the laws of logic. Beneath the charms of literary form and flowers of oratory, sophisms may easily lie concealed. Concentration of effort in the cultivation of a certain sensational way of writing and speaking leaves little energy for the labor of logical thinking.
4. Lack of a sense of responsibility in adopting opinions and disseminating them. This source of error is popularly expressed in the shibboleth, "Free thought and free speech." Thought and speech are as strictly bound by the laws of true and correct thinking as free human actions are bound to obey the laws of morality. It is at least as harmful capriciously to form false opinions and desseminate them as it is deliberately to contract smallpox with a view of spreading it among one's neighbors.
5. There are a host of human passions that in a more intimate way tend to make "the will," indirectly, "father of the thought." We are prone to judge in harmony with the passion that for the moment may dominate us. This is especially true with regard to practical truths of morality and religion that direct conduct and demand sacrifice. Theoretical errors may be accounted for by mere laziness or ignorance. But those ad-

dicted to vices and an inordinate desire of pleasure have an instinctive aversion towards ethical and religious truths. Did the truth that two plus two make four involve any moral restraint, thousands would find a way to deny it. Under the influence of envy, jealousy, hatred, inordinate self-esteem, fear, the will easily deceives the judgment.

## Objections

43. Principles to solve difficulties against the Theses heretofore explained.

**Thesis I.** Recall the explanation of "conformity" in the definition of logical truth as set forth summarily in pp. 17-18, i. e.: "The conformity or agreement spoken of in the definition of truth, etc."

**Thesis II.**

1. When an "idea" is called false, as it sometimes is, then "idea" is really taken to mean, in the mind of the speaker or writer, a judgment, as, for instance, "What is your *idea* of prohibition?"
2. It may sometimes happen that the object before the mind in a simple apprehension is different from the actual object which occasioned the simply apprehended object, as when, for instance, we may apprehend the object "silver" when the object actually present is "tin." Still the simple apprehension of "silver" would be a true simple

apprehension, because it would be in conformity with its object "silver." Should the object of the simple apprehension "silver" be affirmed of the object which is actually "tin," the affirmation would, of course, be false. But this act of affirmation would be a judgment. Hence, it is the judgment, not the simple apprehension that would be false.

3. It does not follow that because ideas or simply apprehensions as such cannot be false, that judgments cannot be false. Because in a judgment we may unite by an affirmation the objects of the simple apprehensions of the subject and predicate when we should separate them by negation, or vice versa.

**Thesis III.**

1. It must be conceded that the *essence* of logical truth is always found in simple apprehension, because the definition of logical truth—"the conformity of thought and thing"—is verified in it. But it must be denied that in simple apprehension that essence of logical truth is furnished with those other characteristics that are necessary to make logical truth complete and perfect and which are found in judgment alone, namely:
   a. (1) Conscious reference of the objects represented in two simple apprehensions (subject and predicate) to realities as they actually exist in the nature of things, as when we

judge, for example, "the window is transparent"

(2) and hence a conscious awareness of "the conformity between thought and thing," and consequently a repose of the mind in its possession of truth.

2. Because the truth of S. A. is found imperfectly in human minds, it does not follow that truth is imperfectly found in the divine intellect, which sees in one perfect *intuitive idea* all truth. There is no composition or division in the divine intellect.
3. When it is said that the mind is at rest and satisfied when it forms a judgment, this is understood of the truth to which it *here* and *now* attains, not of the other truths which it may desire to investigate.
4. In a negative judgment, though the mind denies the conformity between two objects as they are in reality, still there always remains a conformity between the *thought* of these objects as it exists in the mind, and the objects themselves as they are in reality.
5. In the case of a stick dipped in clear water, or the apparent size of the sun and moon, the idea we form of such appearances has not for its object the actual reality of those objects. The object of the ideas is the way they appear to us. If we should then assert by judgment that what appears agrees with the actual reality, we of course err. So it was with the judgment that "the earth was flat."

*Article VI*

## A Brief Notice of Some Additional Questions Connected With Truth and Error

### 44. I. Do logical truth and error admit of degrees?

I. With regard to logical truth—

a. It is obvious that if the *equation* or *conformity* between the knowing mind (thought) and the aspect of the object here and now known (formal object) is considered, logical truth cannot admit of degree. What is equal cannot be more or less equal. In the case of judgment the predicate belongs to the subject or it does not. To make use of an illustration, a ton of gold in so far as we consider it gold, is not more or less golden than an ounce of that precious metal.

b. If, on the other hand, we consider the *subject* which may engage one's study, it is equally obvious that one mind may acquire, both in *extent* and *depth,* a more perfect mastery of that subject than another, and that the same mind may possess a greater knowledge of a subject at one time than at another. The chemist knows more about water than the ordinary man. The mind that has studied the geometry of a triangle knows more about it than the same mind

did when it knew only the definition of a triangle.

We conclude, therefore, that if logical truth is considered *formally*—that is, in so far as it is an equation—it does not admit of degrees; whereas, if logical truth is considered *materially,* that is, in so far as it is concerned with some subject of knowledge about which many attributes may be predicated, logical truth does admit of degrees.

c. It may also be justly said, that a judgment whose predicate is an essential attribute of a subject, is truer in *depth* of meaning than one whose predicate is an accidental quality, as, for instance, "that man is rational" and "this man is learned."

45. **II. Does error or falsity admit of degrees?**

a. No, if we consider merely the non-conformity between thought and thing. If you stray (errare) from the straight line of truth, in so far as you stray, an inch is as good or as bad as a mile. You are in error.

b. If, however, we consider error as a *deformity* between thought and thing, the wider the positive breach of that difficulty is, the more extravagant will be the committed error. A truth-seeker, as a mariner, may deviate more or less widely from his correct course. Hence, if we consider in the case of error, the *extent* of its positive difformity, it admits of degrees.

c. Again, just as one truth regarding the same subject may be more intensively and vitally true than another, so error may be more intensively and vitally false in proportion to the degree of impossibility in predicating a certain attribute of a given subject. It would be, for instance, more vitally false to say that "the moon is made of green cheese" than to say "the moon is a poor subject for poetry."

## CHAPTER II

### States of Mind Regarding Logical Truth

#### *Article I*

States of mind that fall short of Certitude—General definition of Certitude.

46. Having determined what is meant by logical truth and in what acts of the mind it is found, we go on to consider the different states of mind with regard to logical truth or knowledge. These states are: ignorance, doubt, suspicion, opinion, and the most important of all, certitude Other psychical states there are, which may result from and co-exist with knowledge, such as joy, sadness fear etc. With these latter states, because they are not cognitive, epistemology does not, at least directly, concern itself.

*Ignorance,* as the name implies, is the state in which the mind is, when it lacks knowledge of an object. Ignorance may be total or partial, negative or privative.

*a.* *Total,* when the mind has no idea whatsoever of an object, as for example our ignorance of what kind of vegetation grows in the planet Mars.

*b.* *Partial,* when some phase only of an object is unknown to us, as our ignorance of whether the stars are odd or even.

*Negative,* when there is mere absence of knowledge.

*Privative,* when there is absence of knowledge,

which a person, under certain circumstances, is expected to have. For example, a lack of a sufficient knowledge of law in the case of a lawyer would be *privative* ignorance. Whereas, ignorance of law in the case of a blacksmith would be *negative* ignorance.

47. *Doubt* is a state in which the mind, for fear of error, suspends its assent to one or other of two contradictory judgments.

*a.* When the mind sees sufficiently good and solid reasons for affirming each of two contradictories, it is said to be in *positive* doubt.

*b.* When it has no reasons or very slight and trivial reasons for both sides, it is said to be in the *negative* doubt. This negative doubt is practically the same as "ignorance."

48. *Opinion* is a state in which the mind adheres or assents to one side of a contradiction, yet in prudent fear all the while, that the truth may be on the other side. Thus two minds may hold, as they often do, a different opinion upon a subject. And the same mind holding one opinion to-day may, for new reasons perceived, hold a contradictory opinion to-morrow. In opinion the intellect is not completely determined by weight of motive. Hence a command of the will is necessary to complete an opinioned assent.

Opinion is an attitude or state of mind towards what is *probable*. "Opinion" refers to a state of mind, "probability" refers to the likelihood that a judgment is objectively true. Hence we are said to have an opinion (a subjective state) about what is probable (an objective likelihood), and call it a *probable opinion.*

A probable opinion with regard to any proposition does not destroy the validity of holding the contradictory of that same proposition as also probable. Hence

different people may rationally hold contradictory opinions about the same matter, so long as certitude about either cannot be established.

Opinion may have degrees. Two contradictory opinions may be equally probable. In a conflict of opinions, one opinion may, in comparison with others, be more or most probable.

With regard to opinion three things must be kept in mind.

1. In order that an opinion may be prudent, it is required:
   *a.* That due consideration be given to the motives for both sides.
   *b.* That an opinion should be based on a sufficiently weighty motive. That is a weighty motive, which, though it does not exclude all danger of error, yet has in itself sufficient force to justify your proof, and to solve the difficulties of the opposite side.
   *c.* That the assent be not stronger than the motives justify.

A prudent opinion may be erroneous, and an imprudent opinion may strike the truth. For example, "the world is flat" was for ages a prudent opinion though erroneous, because no sufficient reasons were forthcoming in favor of the opposite side, whereas in the case of Galileo, the opinion that "the world is round" was for him, at the time, imprudent, because the proofs he advanced did not seem to justify this conclusion.

Beware of the insinuating trickery of certain popular writers, who begin by the assertion of some opinion and end by assuming this opinion to be a certainty. They begin with "May" and end with "Must."

49. *Suspicion* is a state in which the mind has a

certain tendency to form a judgment, led by the perception of motives. The mind leans towards a judgment but does not form one. We are exceedingly fearful of giving our assent.

50. *Certitude* is a state in which the mind firmly adheres to one of two contradictory judgments without any prudent fear of the other being true, on account of objective, infallible motives that manifest the truth to the mind.

## *Article II*

### The Nature and Kinds of Certitude

51. The definition of Certitude given above is built up from an analysis of that state of mind, which normally constituted men everywhere wish to signify when they say "I am certain of something." Even the most pronounced universal sceptic will admit, should certitude about anything exist, that that definition fairly expresses what certitude should be. It marks off certitude from all other cognitive states of mind—from ignorance, negative and positive doubt, suspicion and opinion.

Now in vindicating the existence of "Natural Certitude" as a fact and consequently in rejecting universal scepticism, we have established the existence of truth and certitude.

It now remains to explain more fully the aforesaid definition. This explanation will set forth more clearly the nature of certitude and point out the essential elements which genuine certitude involves.

52. **The Nature of Certitude.** Certitude is, in general, an attitude or "state of mind" towards truth. This

attitude or state of mind is called "assent" or "adherence." Now any kind of assent or adherence of mind to a judgment or piece of knowledge that is true, does not constitute real and genuine certitude. In order that the assent or adherence of the mind may rise to the level of genuine certitude, it must be endowed with certain features or qualities. As set forth in the definition, the assent of certitude must, in the first place, be characterized (1) by "firmness of adherence to one of two contradictories," a quality which constitutes the *positive element* of every certitude, and secondly (2) "the exclusion of all reasonable or prudent fear of the truth of the opposite contradictory," which constitutes the *negative element* of certitude.

53. Now both these elements of "the state of mind" called certitude are subjective happenings. They are *subjective,* because they are, as qualities of "a state of mind," necessarily *within* the mind. They are "happenings," because heretofore they did not, and now they do exist, in the mind. They must, then, as "subjective happenings and as constituting "subjective certitude," have a determining cause. This determining cause cannot be, or come from, the mind itself. For we are intimately conscious, that the mental state of certitude towards a judgment or statement is not determined *by us,* but rather *for us,* by some objective reality, which, as a *cause,* determines the generation in the mind, both of the "firmness of adherence," and the "exclusion of all reasonable or prudent fear of error," as an *effect.*

It is the objective relation between subject and predicate manifesting itself to, and clearly visible to the mind, and perceived by the mind, that determines and is the infallible guarantee of the subjective "happenings" which we call certitude. In every case of natural certitude, this guarantee is given immediately or mediately

*in* (intrinsically), or *with* (extrinsically), the judgment that is certain. It is called "objective evidence," and manifests the infallible objective motive of certitude—a motive which declares the *object* of a certain judgment to be in itself, what it is, to the exclusion of all reasonable fear of its being any other.

54. Subjective certitude is then, genuine, when the firmness of assent and the exclusion of all reasonable fear of error is guaranteed by a motive that is manifested by sufficient objective evidence. Hence merely "subjective certitude," however indubitable it may be, without sufficient objective evidence to justify it, is not genuine certitude at all. It is spurious and a counterfeit. It may be given to a falsehood. And the mind can never be genuinely certain of a falsehood.

In genuine certitude, then, the mind must be infallibly *motived;* that is, it must be moved to assent firmly by the determining causal influence of sufficient objective evidence, that is decisive in excluding falsehood as well as all reasonable fear of falsehood. This motive or determining cause of certitude is always objective. Indeed, the "motive of certitude" and objective evidence are only aspects of the same reality.

By "motive" is meant the *reason why,* the mind is moved to adhere firmly to this judgment rather than to its contradictory.

55. By "objective motive" we mean a reason that is independent of our desires, sentiments or wilfulness, a reason that is grounded upon the reality to which our judgment has reference, and so presented and made so evidently manifest to the mind, that it justifies our firm adherence to its truth, as well as that of all reasonable men.

By "an infallible motive" we mean, a motive which so evidently manifests the objective, or ontological truth

of the reality about which our certain judgment is concerned, that we know that reality to be just what it is in itself, to the exclusion of all reasonable or prudent fear of its being any other.

56. Fear of error may be *prudent* or reasonable, or *imprudent,* or unreasonable. Fear is *prudent* or reasonable, when we have good and reasonable grounds for our fear. Fear of error that is prudent would destroy certitude. Fear of error is *imprudent,* or unreasonable, when we have no reasonable, or merely trivial grounds or motives for our fear. Imprudent fear of error does not destroy certitude.

The phrase, then, "without any prudent fear," in the definition of certitude, means that certitude excludes all fear that may be based on good and reasonable motives, though it may not exclude all fear based upon unreasonable or trivial motives.

The state of mind called certitude, therefore, demands three essential requisites, namely, (1) firmness of assent or adherence to a truth (*positive requisite*), (2) exclusion of all prudent or reasonable fear of error (*negative requisite*), and (3) an infallible objective motive or reason which determines, and justifies both the mind's "adherence" and its freedom from all "prudent fear" of error (*objective requisite*). The subjective elements or requisites are the *effect* of which the objective element or requisite is the *determining cause.*

57. To understand more fully the nature of certitude, we may approach its analysis from another point of view.

In certitude, when considered in all its completeness, we distinguish:

(1) *The assent,* viewed as the output or act of the mind as its efficient, though not its determining, cause or principle.

(2) *The cognition* or knowledge to which the assent is given.

(3) *The object* which is the term of that cognition.

58. (1) **The assent.** The first quality requisite for a certain assent is *firmness.* It must, however, be a particular kind of firmness. It is necessary, of course, that certain assent excludes all wavering of mind and misgivings, consequently, all presence of fear of error. But firmness of such a character, though necessary, is not yet sufficient to constitute genuine certitude of assent. For the mind may, and sometimes does, give its unwavering and free assent to a false judgment. Such an assent may be unaccompanied by any fear of the truth of its contradictory. It may be described as an undoubting or *indubitable* assent. But since an indubitable assent may be given to what is false, it is not always a genuinely certain assent. It may arise from mere lightness or flippancy of judgment or from the influence of feeling, emotion, sentiment or sheer wilfulness—"the wish is sometimes father" to the assent, as "to the thought." The facility with which we dismiss such an indubitable assent shows how far it was from being genuinely certain. A genuinely certain assent must not be merely *indubitable* in its firmness. Its firmness and steadfastness must in addition be grounded on evident objective motives, that are, in one sense or other, *infallible.* And since the objective motives are, in one way or other, infallible, the assent which they engender is also infallible. The qualities, then, that are characteristic of the assent that rises to the level of genuine certitude are (1) *firmness,* which really implies the exclusion of all prudent fear of error, and (2) *infallibility.*

59. (2) **The cognition.** The assent of the mind to be a genuinely certain assent, must, as we have seen,

be not only firm in the sense of its being *indubitable,* but it must be in some sense *infallible.* But the assent cannot be infallible, unless the knowledge or cognition to which the assent is given, is also infallible, and evidently known to be such by the mind. The firm adhesion or assent of the mind to a judgment which it *thinks* is true is not sufficient to constitute a genuinely certain assent. It is merely "subjective certitude" which may be spurious. The mind must moreover firmly adhere to a judgment which it evidently *knows* to be true. Hence the evident infallibility of the cognition or knowledge to which the mind firmly assents is an essential requisite of genuine certitude. And by infallibility of cognition we mean, not only that the cognition is de facto true, but over and above, that the cognition be *necessarily* and *intrinsically* connected with the truth of the object. And by this we mean, that the cognition in question is, *by its own nature,* evidently incompatible with falsehood.

Those characteristics of certain cognition clearly distinguish it from *opinion.* All opinionative judgment may be true or it may be false. Hence it is not *of its own nature* incompatible with falsehood. On the contrary, the knowledge we call opinion is indifferent to truth or falsehood. Whereas a genuinely certain cognition not only excludes falsehood, but it is reasonably incompatible with falsehood. Hence every certain cognition must be true, though not every true cognition is certain.

60. (3) **The object** *or term of certain cognition or knowledge.* When the mind is certain, it must be certain of something. For how could there be any knowledge, if it be not the knowledge of something? That something is the object. But the mental state of certitude supposes, as we have seen, that the assent

of the mind must be evidently infallible. To secure this infallibility of assent, the knowledge or cognition possessed by the mind must likewise be evidently infallible, that is, must *intrinsically* and *necessarily* be connected with the evident infallible truth of its object. And the infallible truth of the object is secured when, and only when, the object is evidently and therefore really what it is known to be, to the reasonable exclusion of its being any other. Thus the infallibility of the assent is secured by the evident infallibility of the cognition, and the infallibility of cognition is, in turn, secured by the evident infallibility of the object as known. Hence the attitude or state of mind called certitude, which is properly and primarily *subjective,* is ultimately based upon the evidently infallible certainty of the known object.

But we have already said, that certitude applies *primarily* and *properly* only to "formal certitude" or the certitude of cognition or knowledge. How then can we attribute certitude to the *object* and speak of "objective certitude"?

We are to bear in mind, that it is a common tendency in the use of language to attribute to *causes,* qualities which properly and primarily belong to their effects. Thus do we attribute "healthy" to food, because it causes health in living bodies, and speak of "healthy food," though "healthy" is primarily and properly and intrinsically a quality of living beings, and only secondarily and extrinsically a quality of food as the cause of health. We call the Blessed Virgin "our life, our sweetness and our hope," because she causes those qualities within our souls, as effects of her intercessory power. In like manner we attribute certainty to objects and speak of "objective certainty," because it is *the necessity of the object* manifested to the mind by objective evidence whether intrinsic or extrinsic, that *causes* "formal

certitude," which properly and primarily, and intrinsically belongs to its effect, namely to the certitude of cognition or knowledge, and consequently to the assent which is given to that cognition.

61. Different kinds of necessity and infallibility. The necessity and infallibility previously referred to as qualities of the assent, of the cognition and of the object of a genuine certitude, are of three kinds:

(1) Metaphysical. (2) Physical. (3) Moral.

62. (1) Necessity and infallibility are *metaphysical* in character, when they are based upon the relations that arise from the essences of things, relations which like essences themselves admit of no change or exception even through the intervention of divine power. The relation, for instance, between the "whole" and "part" as it is expressed in the axiom, "The whole is greater than any of its parts," is metaphysically necessary and infallible, because it springs *intrinsically* from the essences of "whole" and of "part." The motives for the truth and certainty of such statements are so cogently overwhelming, that the mind is constrained to give to them its assent. Their evidence is coercive. The compelling force upon our assent does not, however, originate in the mind, but in objective evidence. The perceived objective connections, between their subjects and predicates, are *absolute* (absoluta), that is, FREE FROM all conditions; are necessarily and infallibly true and certain for all intellects in time and eternity. Such truths are said to be *metaphysically certain,* which literally means that their truth and certainty transcend or are beyond (meta-) and hence are independent of, the physical conditions of the created, material universe. This characteristic of independence does not imply that metaphysical certainty contains no element of experi-

ence. It does. Because all knowledge begins, at least, in sense experience.

The compelling evidence of some of those truths is *immediately* presented to the mind, as in the case of "the whole is greater than any of its parts," "a thing cannot be and not be at the same time and under the same circumstances," "whatever happens must have a cause," etc. The compelling evidence of other truths of this kind is *mediate,* as "the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles." All the demonstrated truths of mathematics are of this nature. In our assent to judgments or truths, whose features of metaphysical necessity and absolute infallibility are compellingly evident, whether immediately or mediately, there is no place for "fear of error" of any kind, prudent or imprudent. Their contradictories are evidently known to be absolutely impossible.

63. There are, however, some metaphysical truths, whose evidence, though amply sufficient to justify in their regard our certain assent and thereby exclude all "prudent fear of error," yet that evidence is not so clearly compelling as to exclude the possibility of "imprudent fear of error."

Take, for instance, the following truths, "God exists," "the soul is immortal," "the human will is free," "miracles are possible." Considering all the grounds and motives of their truth, we have sufficient evidence to hold them firmly and steadily as certain. We have no "prudent fear of error" in their regard. At the same time we realize that, owing to the complexity of the arguments by which these truths are established as certain, and because the premises upon which those arguments rest are denied or doubted by so many sceptical systems of philosophy, their evidence does not carry with it the same compelling force as that which charac-

terizes the certainty of "the whole is greater than any of its parts" or the cogency of the demonstrated truths of mathematics. It is possible, then, so to divert the mind from the motives and reasons upon which their certainty rests, and so to concentrate attention upon the arguments of writers who doubt them or deny them, as to be gradually led to entertain an "imprudent fear" of their truth and certainty. As certainties, then, those truths exclude all "prudent fear" of error, though they may not exclude all "imprudent fear" of error.

64. **Physical Necessity and Infallibility.** Physical necessity and infallibility are not directly based upon the essences of things, but upon the uniform way, revealed to us by sense experience and inductive reasoning, in which the non-free agencies of nature exercise their energies. This uniform way of acting is called the "law of the uniformity of nature." Thus "fire uniformly burns" (that is, consumes what is combustible), "heat expands bodies," "the dead remain dead."

At first sight the necessity and infallibility which are claimed for physical forces do not seem to be necessary and infallible at all. Necessity and infallibility carry with them, it may be claimed, the features of absolute universality and inviolability. But the uniform way in which the forces of natural agencies exercise their actions, may be, and sometimes actually is, subjected to exceptions by the miraculous intervention of divine omnipotence. Fire may not, and sometimes has not, burned (consumed). The dead have not always, without exception, remained dead. Bodies, which according to uniform law, should have sunk in water, have not sunk.

The uniform way of acting that is ordinarily characteristic of the non-free agencies of nature is, therefore, neither absolutely universal, absolutely infallible, abso-

lutely necessary. The possible and sometimes the actual happening of results, opposite to what is expected, destroy their absoluteness.

Notwithstanding the admissibility of those facts, we still maintain that physical necessity, based upon the order and uniformity with which non-free natural agents act, is a true necessity of its kind, and, therefore, furnishes a motive of genuine certainty, not only for the way in which they had acted in the past, but also for the way in which they will act in the future. Physical necessity is not, it is true, absolute and metaphysical. It is always *conditional* or *hypothetical*. The exercise of physical forces, antecedent to their functioning, is subject to certain conditions, the chief of which is, "if a miraculous intervention of God does not impede their exercise." Fire, for instance, will inevitably burn, that is, consume, provided the Creator does not "impede by a miracle, the exercise of its natural tendency to burn." Should we make the above statement, with the condition attached, the whole proposition is as absolutely inviolable, and therefore as absolutely universal and necessary as a metaphysical truth. Because what is stated in such an hypothetical proposition is not that "God will intervene miraculously," nor that "fire will burn" (consume), but rather the *connection* between the "condition" and the "conditioned" elements of the proposition. And this connection is absolutely necessary, and metaphysically certain. Again, if we mean by the proposition, "fire burns," that "fire has a *natural tendency* to burn (consume)," then is the statement also absolutely necessary and metaphysically certain. Because fire essentially has a tendency to burn.

If, however, we abstract from the condition altogether though not deny it, is the conditioned phrase, "fire burns" (consumes), considered apart and on its own

merits, in any sense necessary? Yes, we maintain it is physically, though not metaphysically, necessary.

The problem, then, is—granted that no matter how strong our expectation may be that each particular case of fire will be followed by burning, that is consuming, granted that we are fully aware that each case of the consuming power of fire could possibly be impeded by the miraculous intervention of Omnipotence, are we still reasonably certain that any particular case of fire will really burn, that is, consume? Or are we still reasonable and hence prudent in basing our certainty upon the uniform natural law that governs the action of fire? We maintain that we are reasonably and prudently certain that this particular fire will burn, not, however, metaphysically, but *physically certain.* It would be irrational and highly imprudent to suppose, that a wise Creator will capriciously impede, by a miracle, His laws at any moment. The remote possibility, in the case of natural agencies, of not exercising their ordinary effects, when every natural circumstance favorable for the production of such effects are present, is not a rational motive for "prudent fear" that those effects will not follow. Who would cast himself from the pinnacle of the Woolworth building in the vain expectation that his life would be saved by the intervention of a miracle?

65. **Moral Necessity and Infallibility.** This kind of necessity is based upon the ordinary and uniform way in which free agents act, when they follow the natural instincts of their moral nature. Hence it is morally necessary that "men tell the truth and are honest," that "mothers love their children," that "cooks will not poison food." Hence we are morally certain of such truths. Exceptions are quite possible, even without invoking a miracle to explain them. The perversity

of the human will is a sufficient cause to explain those exceptions.

66. Like physical necessity, moral necessity is not absolute, but *conditional* or *hypothetical.* Every case of moral necessity is subject to the condition, "if the free will follows the instincts of its moral nature." Just, then, as in the case of physical necessity, if we explicitly condition our ordinary moral judgments with this proviso, and say, for example, "If the free wills of mothers followed, and follow and will follow the moral instincts of their natures, then all mothers loved their children in the past, now love their children, and will in the future love their children," that statement would be metaphysically certain. "All mothers have a tendency to love their children" would be likewise metaphysically certain.

But the question is, is the statement, "this or that mother, whom I know to be good and virtuous, loves her children or will love her children," considered in itself and independent of any condition, in any sense necessary and infallible, and therefore, certain? We again answer, yes, it is necessary and infallible and hence certain, in the sense of being morally necessary and infallible, not of course being either metaphysically or physically necessary. Because it would be irrational and highly imprudent to suppose that a good and virtuous mother did, or now does, or will violate haphazardly the moral law of her nature, though we admit that the human will has the power, owing to its freedom, to act perversely in any individual case.

Hence the phrase, "without any prudent fear," etc., is inserted in the definition of certitude, not because of metaphysical certitude, which excludes all fear, prudent and imprudent, but because of physical and moral certitudes, which exclude, indeed, prudent fear, but may

not exclude imprudent fear. Hence imprudent fear may co-exist with a state of genuine certitude.

67. *Divisions of Certitude.* (1) Spurious and (2) GENUINE subjective certitude. Mere indubitableness of assent, sometimes called subjective certitude, which may be given to a falsehood, and hence not based upon the known evidence of objective truth, is not certitude at all. It is only deception.

Subjective certitude or certitude of assent alone, may be, however, genuine, provided it is a purely mental or psychical state, produced by objective evidence, though we should, for the time being, abstract from the objective evidence and attend to the subjective state of mind alone.

68. From the foregoing explanation of its nature, the following divisions of certitude obviously arise:

I. By reason of the manner of its acquisition, certitude may be (1) immediate or (2) mediate.
II. By reason of its perfection, it may be (1) natural or direct and (2) philosophical or reflex.
III. By reason of its exclusion of all prudent fear of error, it may be (1) absolute or (2) hypothetical.
IV. By reason of the different kinds of necessity and infallibility of the objective motive, certitude is divided into (1) metaphysical, (2) physical and (3) moral.

69. In very many cases physical certitude may be reduced or raised to the high level of metaphysical certitude, not by reason of the immediate motive that moves the mind to be physically certain, but rather by the help of an admitted metaphysical principle. Because the opposite of what is physically certain could not be ad-

mitted, without denying the certainty of the metaphysical principle. Thus my own existence is to me a physically certain and contingent fact made known to me by experience. Yet I can reduce the physical certainty of my own existence to a metaphysical certainty by the use of the principle of causality. Because if I did not exist, then there would be no cause to account for my activities made known to me by the experience of my consciousness.

In like manner, moral certainty may be reduced to metaphysical. I am morally certain of the existence of Russia. That moral certainty is based upon the testimony of thousands of witnesses. Did all those witnesses conspire to deceive me, then no *sufficient cause* could be assigned for such a preposterous conspiracy.

70. V. By reason of the formal object and principle, certitude is (1) natural and (2) supernatural.

**Natural Certitude** is that firm assent to a truth which the mind reaches by its own native powers of intelligence, and which is determined by natural evidence. Hence natural certitude extends to those truths only which the natural and unaided human reason can discover.

**Supernatural Certitude** is the certitude which men have of the truths which have been revealed by God and whose motive is divine authority. Hence if we consider its motive, supernatural certitude is not only firmer and stronger than natural certitude, but extends to truths that are impervious to natural reason.

There is a twofold difference between natural and supernatural certitude. They differ both with regard to their (a) "principle" and (b) "formal object." By principle is here meant that from which something pro-

ceeds. By "formal object" is understood the determining cause or motive which decides the firm assent of the mind. The "principle" of natural certitude is the intellect. For natural certitude proceeds from the intellect, because it is the intellect as a natural and unaided faculty that puts forth the act of firm assent.

Now the *"principle"* of supernatural certitude is not the bare and naked intellect, but the intellect, elevated and strengthened by the supernatural light of faith and the natural will also elevated and strengthened by the supernatural movement of the Holy Spirit, by which that faculty is freely moved to command the firm assent of the intellect. Hence supernatural certitude proceeds from a principle different from that from which natural certitude proceeds. It is inconceivable that an act of firm assent, produced by the intellect and commanded by the will when both are aided by supernatural grace, could be given to a falsehood.

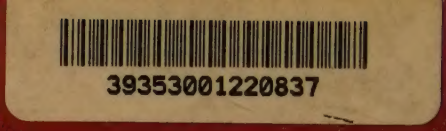
The *formal object* of natural certitude are the objective motives or reasons that are the determining cause of firm assent or subjective certitude. The formal object, then, of natural certitude are the motives that are based on objective evidence as known by the light of natural reason.

The *formal object* in supernatural certitude is the authority of God revealing a truth. The truth that is known with certainty may be the same in both. For example, "God exists." This truth may be reached by natural reason. This same truth may also be reached by an act of supernatural certitude which is called *"Faith."*

71. No legitimate conclusion of philosophy or natural science can ever contradict a truth of revelation. Both are truths, and truth cannot contradict truth. Should a

seeming antagonism arise between faith and science, "I should never give up," says Newman, "my certitude in that truth which I firmly believed to have come from heaven: . . . I should be patient; I should look for better days, but I should still believe." (Grammar of Assent, C. VII.)

Certitude once established as genuine is indefectible.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